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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, who rules the raging of the sea, give to the Members of this body a special measure of wisdom and strength for the living of these days.

Lord, help them to see what a practical resource they have in You as You empower them to complete their daily business with civility, cooperation, and competence.

Bless the Senate leadership, the leaders of both parties, and their assistants and aides. Bless those who chair committees and subcommittees who manage bills.

Lord, fill Capitol Hill with the unmistakable sense of Your presence as You enable our lawmakers to accomplish those things that without You would be impossible.

We pray in Your precious Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 3076

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, first, Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3076) to provide stability to and enhance the services of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

POSTAL SERVICE REFORM ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, last night—and this is relevant to what we just did, putting the new bill on the calendar for a second reading. Last night, we had a chance to continue progress on a bipartisan, long-overdue postal reform bill when I moved to expeditiously fix a few technical errors to the legislation sent to us by the House. Sadly, my request was blocked by the junior Senator from Florida without much in the way of clear explanation.

For instance, he says he wants to stand up for postal workers, but all the

organizations representing postal workers strongly support this bill. They are eager for it. He says he wants to protect and strengthen Medicare, but the Postal Service already pays into Medicare; and the CBO says this proposal, this bill, will save the government money.

So I hope for the sake of our postal workers, our Postal Service, and for the millions, tens of millions, and even hundreds of millions of Americans who depend on the Postal Service, that this is not obstruction for obstruction's sake.

This is a textbook example of why Americans often get frustrated with the Senate and with Washington. Postal reform is highly bipartisan. It got a majority of votes in the House from both parties. It is desperately needed. We all hear from our constituents about snail mail and the price they pay for it. It is backed by both parties in both Houses, including the chairman and ranking member of the relevant committees—the Democratic and Republican leading members of both committees. And it has broad support from the postal workers, who tend to be Democratic, and Postmaster DeJoy, who is a friend of President Trump's and was appointed by him.

Nevertheless, it was blocked. I am sure that Republicans don't want to be the party that was responsible for blocking popular and bipartisan postal reform.

The delay is regrettable, but the good news is that we will get bipartisan postal reform done. It has been negotiated for months and debated for a decade. It has enough bipartisan support—more than enough—ample support to become law, and I am hopeful we will move it through this Chamber as quickly as we can. And that is what the procedural motion I did before was about.

And I certainly want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for working on this bill, particularly, my

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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friend Chairman GARY PETERS, who spoke passionately last night in defense of the bill and rebutted all of the Senator from Florida's arguments handily. And I look forward to getting postal reform passed through this Chamber very soon.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Next, on the CR, before the end of the week, the Senate must come to an agreement to pass a short-term extension of government funding in order to give appropriators more time to complete a yearlong omnibus. It is the most responsible thing we can do to support our appropriators as they continue their bipartisan work to finish an omnibus. No one—and certainly not my Republican colleagues—wants a Republican government shutdown; so I am hopeful that they will cooperate with us to pass this necessary CR, which every single Democrat wants to happen and will cooperate to make sure that it happens.

Once again, I thank Chairman LEAHY and Ranking Member SHELBY for their leadership and for working in good faith to arrive at a yearlong spending agreement. I also commend my colleagues in the House, Chairman DeLAURO and Ranking Member GRANGER, Democrat and Republican, for their work. A yearlong omnibus is a thousand times better than relying on CRs—continuing resolutions—to lurch from one short-term extension to the next. I remain optimistic that both sides will keep working together on drafting legislation to fund the government so it can fully serve the American people while keeping us safe here at home.

In the meantime, both sides should come to an agreement to make sure the CR—the continuing resolution, the short-term funding of the government—is passed by this Chamber to avoid even any hint of a government shutdown.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night I filed cloture on additional Defense nominees, including Celeste Wallander, nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. If this were any other time, Ms. Wallander's nomination most certainly would have sailed through the Senate with unanimous consent, without the need for a rollcall vote.

At the committee level, her nomination was approved with strong support from both parties; and, frankly, she should have been approved unanimously the moment she was reported out of the Armed Services Committee. Many on both sides of the aisle recognize we need her at the Pentagon now. As one of our Nation's top experts on Russian affairs, her leadership is vital right now.

Sadly—sadly—one Republican, just one, has objected to Ms. Wallander's

confirmation without offering any concrete justification. So we are going to take up floor time to advance her nomination the long way, just as we have done for many nominees who face unprecedented obstruction by a small group of Republicans. This is not the majority of the Republican Party or the majority of Republican Senators, but a small group using the Senate rules—many of which are arcane and outdated—to stand in the way and slow the whole process down, endangering our security.

Let's be clear. To intentionally delay the confirmation of a critical Pentagon position—an expert on Russia at a time when we need her in the position most—just to score political points is the definition of cynical and is actively making the American people less safe.

Sadly, Ms. Wallander is far from the only nominee being held up by these obstructionists on the right. The junior Senator from Arkansas has also placed blanket holds on a number of U.S. attorneys and U.S. marshals, men and women whose job is literally to protect the public and prosecute criminals.

If my Republican colleagues are so concerned about public safety, why are they standing in the way of confirming some of the most important law enforcement officers in the Federal Government? It is "Alice in Wonderland" logic. It is delay for delay's sake, especially when new reasons keep coming up to justify these tactics. One reason is rebutted, and then another one comes up. It seems like some of these colleagues just want to obstruct to obstruct, oppose to oppose—bad for America, bad for Democrats, bad for Republicans.

Hijacking the rules of the Senate to place blanket holds on nominees has no legitimate justification. And when it comes to nominees tasked with advancing our national defense, our diplomacy, and our public safety, it only makes the American people less safe.

As long as these delay tactics continue, we will continue to hold votes on these nominees as necessary. If that means more late nights with a large number of votes in one sitting like we had to do over the last 2 weeks, then that is what we will do.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now on lowering costs, in President Biden's first year, the economy added an amazing 6.6 million new jobs, the most ever—ever—for a President's first year. This figure surpassed just about every forecast from a year ago. It is a reflection of how far our economy has come since the start of COVID and that the right leadership in office makes all the difference.

But we all know Americans still need more help, especially when it comes to lowering the cost of living. Democrats know what the American people know. The pandemic decimated our supply chains, our labor supply, and much

more, causing prices to increase for everyday items. We never had a pandemic to this extent in 100 years, and obviously it interrupted the economy and its supply chains and labor supply.

For the past year, Democrats have been the party focused on finding solutions to lowering the cost of living for everyday Americans. As early as last summer, Democrats pushed to have the Senate approve legislation to relieve U.S. supply chains and increase domestic manufacturing, which, thankfully, was bipartisan and which the House passed recently as well. Soon the conference process for that bill will begin.

But this is just one example out of many. For the past few weeks, I have heard from my colleagues about a number of proposals they have been working on aimed squarely at helping Americans better afford the basics, from medications, to the cost of food, to the cost of cars, to more. Later today, Democrats will use our weekly caucus lunch to talk more about some of the ideas my colleagues are working on.

Lowering costs must—must—be a bipartisan effort. Americans in States, those blue and red and in between, need relief as soon as possible.

While many on the other side of the aisle have spent a lot of time giving floor speeches and presenting charts about rising costs, where are their actual proposals? We don't hear what they would do to solve the problem. Attacking the problem doesn't make it any better; proposing solutions, as Democrats are doing, does. Republicans should step up and say what their plan is to fight inflation, not just point fingers. That solves no problem.

Democrats will continue to propose legislation on cost cutting, and we are going to continue to focus on helping everyday Americans find relief. Some of my Democratic colleagues have already released their proposals publicly, and I am sure many of them would welcome Republican cooperation. Instead of sitting on the sidelines, Republicans should join Democrats in our efforts to help Americans reap the full benefits of our historic recovery.

Our goal: to have the wages that have increased stay up but lower the costs down so the average American has more money in his or her pocket.

We Democrats are committed to working in good faith to get things done in this Chamber. I hope our Republican colleagues will constructively join us instead of just pointing fingers.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.